

MARKED-UP VERSION OF THE CLAIMS:

1-15 (canceled)

16. (previously presented) A connection device, comprising:

a control lever (1) configured to pivotably and captively connect to a support element (6), the control lever (1) having a calotte-shaped recess (5) in supporting section (3) configured to receive a spherical end (7) of the support element (6) and a spherical top side (4) in the supporting section (3) above the calotte-shaped recess (5); and a retaining element (9) selectively connected to the control lever (1) and configured to connect to the support element (6), the retaining element (9) having an upper and a lower leg (10,11) connected to each other by a connecting section (12) to form a U-shaped cross-sectional geometry, an essentially round geometrically closed first opening (13) in the upper leg (10) receives the spherical top side (4) of the supporting section (3) of the control lever (1), and an essentially slot-shaped geometrically closed second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) which is configured to receive a recess (8) below the spherical end (7) of the support element (6).

17. (previously presented) The connection device according to claim 16, wherein the control lever (1) is designed as a cam follower.

18. (previously presented) The connection device according to claim 16, wherein the retaining element (9) has a material thickness less than an axial width of the recess (8) so that upon connection to the support element (6), the retaining element (9) is freely movable in all pivot positions of the control lever (1) in the undercut.

19. (previously presented) The connection device according to claim 18, wherein the legs (10, 11) and the connecting section (12) of the retaining element (9) are smooth-surfaced.

20. (previously presented) A connection system, comprising: a support element (6) having a spherical end (7) and an undercut (8) below the spherical end (7);
a control lever (1) pivotably and captively connected to the support element (6), the control lever (1) having a calotte-shaped recess (5) in a supporting section (3) to receive the spherical end (7) of the support element (6), and a spherical upper side (4) in the supporting section (3) above the calotte-shaped recess (5); and

a retaining element (9) connected to the control lever (1) and the support element (6), the retaining element (9) having a U-shaped cross-sectional geometry with an upper and a lower leg (10,11) which are connected to each other by a connecting section (12), a geometrically closed first opening (13) in the upper leg (10) being essentially round to receive the spherical upper side (4) of the supporting section (3) of the control lever (1) and a geometrically closed second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) being essentially slot-shaped to receive the undercut (8) of the support element (6).

21. (previously presented) The system according to claim 20, wherein the support element (6) is an axially movable piston of a valve controller of an internal combustion engine.

22. (previously presented) The system according to claim 20, wherein the first opening (13) is sized to securely support the upper leg (10) on the spherical top side (4) of the supporting section (3) of the control lever (1).

23. (previously presented) Connection device according to claim 22, wherein a transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than a diameter (D1) of the first opening (13) of the upper leg (10).

24. (previously presented) The connection device according to claim 23, wherein the transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than the diameter of the support element (6) above and below the undercut (8).

25. (previously presented) A device, comprising:

an upper leg (10) having an essentially round geometrically closed first opening (13) configured to receive a spherical top side (4) of a supporting section (3) of a control lever (1) with a calotte-shaped recess (5) in the supporting section (3) for receiving a spherical end (7) of a support element (6) of a valve controller of an internal combustion engine;

a lower leg (11) having an essentially slot-shaped geometrically closed second opening (14) configured to receive a recess (8) below the spherical end (7) of the support element (6); and

a connecting section (12) connected to the upper leg (10) and to the lower leg (11) forming a U-shaped cross-sectional geometry.

26. (previously presented) The device as recited in claim 25, wherein the upper leg (10) and the lower leg (11) have lead-in chamfers (17, 18,19,20) in the area of their respective free ends (15,16).

27. (previously presented) The device as recited in claim 25, wherein free ends (15,16) of the legs (10,11) point away from each other.

28. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) has a stadium-like geometry including two parallel opening sections connected via semi-circular opening sections.

29. (previously presented) The device according to claim 28, wherein at least one of the semi-circular opening sections of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) includes a slot-like extension (21, 22).

30. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein a transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than a diameter (D1) of the first opening (13) of the upper leg (10).

31. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein a transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than a diameter of the support element (6) above and below the recess (8).

32. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein the upper leg (10) is axially shorter than the lower leg (11).

33. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein a second connection radius (R2) between the lower leg (11) and the connecting section (12) is smaller than a first connection radius (R1) between the connecting section (12) and the upper leg (10).

34. (previously presented) The device according to claim 25, wherein a second separation distance (L2) between the lower leg (11) and the upper leg (10) near the connecting section (12) is greater than a first separation distance (L1) between a second free end (15) of the lower leg (11) and a first free end (16) of the upper leg (10).

35. (new) The device according to claim 25 wherein the upper leg (10), the lower leg (11) a connecting section (12) consist of a bent and smooth-surfaced sheet metal.

36. (new) The device as recited in claim 25, wherein the upper leg (10) and the lower leg (11) have lead-in chamfers (17, 18,19,20) in the area of their respective free ends (15,16);

wherein the free ends (15,16) of the legs (10,11) point away from each other;

wherein the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) has a stadium-like geometry including two parallel opening sections connected via semi-circular opening sections; wherein at least one of the semi-circular opening sections of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) includes a slot-like extension (21, 22); wherein a transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than a diameter (D1) of the first opening (13) of the upper leg (10); wherein a transverse width (D2) of the second opening (14) in the lower leg (11) is smaller than a diameter of the support element (6) above and below the recess (8); wherein the upper leg (10) is axially shorter than the lower leg (11); wherein a second connection radius (R2) between the lower leg (11) and the connecting section (12) is smaller than a first connection radius (R1) between the connecting section (12) and the upper leg (10); wherein a second separation distance (L2) between the lower leg (11) and the upper leg (10) near the connecting section (12) is greater than a first separation distance (L1) between a second free end (15) of the lower leg (11) and a first free end (16) of the upper leg (10); wherein the upper leg (10), the lower leg (11) and the connecting section (12) consist of a be smooth-surfaced sheet metal.